



An Impartial
ENQUIRY, &c.



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An Impartial

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ENGLAND



[Price Sixpence]

AN IMPARTIAL
ENQUIRY

INTO THE

Reasonableness and Necessity of a
BILL for reducing and limiting
the Number of PLACES in the
House of Commons.

SHEWING,

That the passing such a BILL
would be attended with the most
mischievous and fatal Consequen-
ces to this Nation in the present
Conjuncture of Affairs.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the Oxford-
Arms in Warwick-Lane,

M DCC XXXIX.

Great Britain

Commons House of
Parliament

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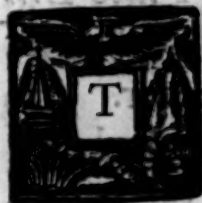
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THE *Gentlemen* who withdrew themselves from Parliament the last Sessions, for Reasons which they have not yet thought fit to entrust their Friends with, or to publish to the World, have at length declar'd by the Mouth of the *Craftsman*, their Intention to return to their Stations in the approaching Sessions,

Sessions, in order “to use their ut-
 “most Endeavours to promote a
 “Bill for reducing and limiting the
 “Number of Places in the House
 “of Commons, as the only Method
 “to secure the Independency of
 “Parliament, and consequently the
 “Prosperity of the whole King-
 “dom.

The *Livery-men* of the City of
London have been spirited up upon
 this Occasion ---- “to *require* it of
 “their four Members, that they
 “make the passing of a *Place-Bill*
 “a previous Step to the passing of
 “any *Money-Bill* whatsoever.

And the *Craftsman* has declar’d,
 ---- “That an effectual Bill is pre-
 “paring for this Purpose, and
 “wishes there may be as full a
 “House, as ever was known, to
 “support it.

He has likewise made this farther
 Declaration, ---- “That, in Case
 “the

“ the *Place-men* should be found
 “ strong enough to defeat this Bill,
 “ those *Gentlemen*, who withdrew
 “ themselves from Parliament the
 “ last Sessions, will have a stronger
 “ Reason to withdraw themselves
 “ this Sessions.

When Things are carried to such
 an exorbitant Length, when the
 Prosperity of the whole Kingdom
 is made to depend upon the Pas-
 sing of this Bill, and when the
 Rejecting of it is given as a Rea-
 son for that most *infamous Conduct*
 of deserting a Trust of the high-
 est Nature; ---- when this is the
 Case, it is fit and necessary that
 the *Merits* and the *real Consequen-*
ces of this Bill should be thorough-
 ly examin'd, and set in a true Light;
 which has not, I think, been yet
 done by any Writer on either side
 of the Question.

----- I
 That

I do agree with the *Craftsman*, and the Writers on that side of the Question, ----- That it is a Consideration of the greatest *Importance*, ---- whether the Number of Places in the House of Commons ought to be reduced and limited, or not.

And I doubt not to make it evidently appear to every impartial Man, --- That the present Number of Places possess'd by Members of the House of Commons, is so far from endangering our Liberties, by placing too great a Power in the Hands of the Crown, that, if the Number of them was to be reduc'd, in our present Circumstances, the next House of Commons would be entirely under the Influence of a *Foreign Power*.

The great Evil and Danger to be guarded against in this Nation, and especially at this Conjunction, is, —

That

That *French* Influence does prevail
in any of our Councils.

This was what ruin'd all King
William's Measures, and made his
Reign so unprosperous; --- *France*
was in all his Councils.

The Truth of this cannot be con-
troverted. Bishop *Burnet*, not to
quote any other Writers, has put this
Matter beyond all Doubt and Di-
spute.

“ As soon as our Parliament was
“ opened, it appeared that the
“ *French* had a great Party in it.
“ It is certain, great Sums came over
“ this Winter from *France*; the Pack-
“ et-boat came seldom without
“ 10000 *Louis d'Ors*, it brought
“ often more; the Nation was fill'd
“ with them, and in six Months
“ time a Million of Guineas was
“ coined out of them. The Mer-
“ chants indeed said, that the Ba-
“ lance of Trade was then turn'd so
“ much

“ much to our Side, that, whereas
 “ we were wont to carry over a
 “ Million of our Money in Specie,
 “ we then sent no Money to *France*,
 “ and had at least half that Sum sent
 “ over to Balance the Trade; yet
 “ this did not account for that vast
 “ Flood of *French* Gold, that was
 “ visible amongst us. And, upon
 “ the *French Ambassador's* going a-
 “ way, a very sensible Alteration
 “ was found in the Bills of Exchange;
 “ so it was concluded, that great
 “ Remittances were made to him,
 “ and that these were distributed
 “ among Those, who resolved to
 “ merit a Share in that Wealth,
 “ which came over now so copi-
 “ ously, beyond the Example of
 “ former Times*.

Corrupting the *Councils* of her
 Neighbours, has always been the
 Policy

* *Burnet's Hist.* Vol. II. pag. 257.

[II]

Policy of *France*; but never more so, than at this Juncture.

It is a common Remark, ---- That the *English* always beat the *French* in the Field, but the *French* were too hard for them in the Cabinet. The meaning of which is, not that *France* had more able Ministers, but that she found Means to influence the Councils of *England*, and turn them to her own Interest and Advantage.

I believe no Man suspects, this Influence prevails at this Time. But should this Bill pass, and the *Tory Party* be the Majority in any future Parliament; we might boast indeed of a Parliament uninfluenc'd by the *Prince* on the Throne, but entirely govern'd by *French* Councils.

There cannot be a plainer or a stronger Proof that this would be our Condition, than that all the

Partizans of *France*, and every profess'd *JACOBITE* and *Papist* throughout the Kingdom, are at this time, as the *Craftsman* expresses it, "using
 " their utmost Arts and Endeavours
 " to promote a Bill for reducing
 " and limiting the Number of Places in the House of Commons.

This cannot be denied. And can it possibly be true then what the *Craftsman* asserts, - - - - " that
 " such a Bill is the only Method to
 " secure the Prosperity of the whole
 " Kingdom?

Is it not on the contrary most certain, that, in the Opinion of our Enemies, this is the only Method to have *French* Councils prevail in that great Assembly?

A Government which is entrusted with Power and Influence, may possibly enslave their Subjects; but a Government that is poor, and divested of all Power and Influence, must

must inevitably fall a Prey and a Sacrifice to some rich and powerful neighbouring Prince.

The History of our own, and of almost all other Nations, is an incontestable Proof of this; and we need but look around us at this time, and behold too many melancholy Instances of it.

Is not this the present deplorable State and Condition of *S—*? That Nation, jealous of their Liberties, having suffer'd so much from the arbitrary Power of the preceding Reign, divested their present *King* of all Power and Influence; and by that only Means, and no other, have given *France* an Opportunity to influence and direct all their Councils.

The very *Expedient* by which they inconsiderately design'd to preserve their Liberties, has been the occasion of their becoming the Slaves
and

and Tools of a *foreign* and a *Popish* Power.

And is not this the *Expedient* which a *Faction* are now using their utmost Endeavours to put in practice in this Nation?

Lists of the *Place-Men*, as they are *odiously* call'd, have been publish'd and dispers'd at the great *Expence* of the *Faction* throughout the Kingdom.

The City of *London* has been deluded and infatuated by a *few violent* and *republican* Spirits, to give Instructions to, nay, *inconsistently* with their own Clamour for the *Independency* of Parliament, to REQUIRE it of their Members, - - -
 “ that they make the passing of a
 “ *Place-Bill* a previous Step to the
 “ passing of any *Money-Bill* whatsoever;” and this, tho’ they declare in the same Instructions, - - -
 “ that the Nation is threaten’d with
 “ the

“ the most imminent Dangers from
 “ *Abroad.*

If the *Faction* were able to carry this Point, can any Man imagine they would stop here? No, the Mask would then be laid aside, and we should be told, that the *Crown* had still too great Power and Influence, and there were more Branches that must be lopp'd off; nor would they desist till they had, after the Model of S——, left their *Prince* nothing but the Name of a *King.*

What Confusion must this raise in the Nation at this time?

This Method was chalk'd out to them by that *Man*, who was once at the Head of, and directed all their Councils, tho' they are now *asham'd* of him, the renown'd Author of the *Dissertation upon Parties.*

He had Penetration enough to see that this was the only *Scheme* that
 could

could overturn and ruin the present Establishment; and that if once the Power of the *Crown* were reduced according to his *Scheme*, that is, according to the Model of the S— Government, *England* would soon be brought to the Condition in which we now behold that unhappy People; and that it would be absolutely in the Power of *France* to impose the *Pretender* upon us.

This ought to awaken and alarm every *Englishman*, who is a Friend to the present Establishment, when he sees a Bill of this Nature push'd on with so much *Vehemence*; when he sees, that *Corrupting* the Councils of all the Princes and States of *Europe*, who are either so blind that they do not, or their Ministers so wicked that they will not see it, is that great *Engine*, by which *France* is now aspiring to universal Monarchy.

And

And is this a *Time* for *England* to reduce the Power of the *Crown*? Must not *France* rejoice to see this done? And do we not see the fatal Consequences and Effect of it in *S —*? By reducing the Power of that *Crown* to its present low Condition, they are now entirely govern'd by *French* Councils; which, in all probability, will involve them in the greatest of all Miseries, that of a bloody *Civil War*.

This is the true Light, in which we ought to view this *Scheme* for reducing the Power of the *Crown* in this Nation. Nor can any possible Reason be assign'd, why it will not operate, in case it were to succeed, just in the same manner it has done in *S —*, only with this Difference, of having a *Papish Pretender* impos'd upon us.

There is not indeed the least Reason to apprehend that the present

C

Par-

Parliament could be influenc'd by *French* Councils, even if this Bill were to pass. But the Case would most certainly be quite otherwise with respect to a future Parliament.

This is certain, that, if this Bill were to pass into a Law, it would greatly discourage the *Friends* of the Government from endeavouring to come into Parliament.

Whereas, a Man, who is an *Enemy* to the present Establishment, does not stand in need of *this* Encouragement of obtaining a Place to use his utmost Endeavours to procure a Seat in that House.

As his Design of coming into Parliament, is to betray his Country, so he is sure to receive his *Reward* from another *Quarter*.

This is the true State of the Case, and that Man must be infatuated, who does not, or will not see.

I am not pleading for a *Dependency* of the *Parliament* upon the *Crown*, or for *Corruption*, as it is *plausibly*, but very *falsly* call'd.

No, it is to prevent *Corruption*, that *Corruption*, which must be our *Ruin*, if it prevails, the *Corruption* by a *Foreign Power*, and which, it is notorious, prevail'd in every *Parliament* throughout the *Reign* of *King William*.

It is no *Argument* against the *Truth* of what I have here laid down, and that this *Bill*, if it were to pass, would not be attended with any of these fatal *Consequences*; that we see Men very vehement in obtaining such a *Bill*, who not only are possess'd of great *Property*, but it must be confess'd are not *Enemies* to the present *Government*; for there have been *Instances*, at all *Times*, of such Men being led away by the strong *Passions* of *Ambition*.

and Revenge, and by not attending to the unavoidable Consequences of their Conduct, and by joining themselves to the Enemies of their Country, so as to involve the Nation in great and inextricable Difficulties and Dangers.

But it is an unanswerable Argument, that the Consequences of passing such a Bill would be what I have describ'd them, when it is most notorious, that every disaffected Person in the Kingdom, as well *Papist*, as *Protestant*, cannot help discovering the warmest Zeal for the passing of this Bill.

These Men plainly see the *fatal Turn*, which the passing of such a Bill must necessarily give to *Elections* throughout the Kingdom.

For, if, by their own way of reasoning, the present Number of Employments is the chief Encouragement to the *Friends* of the Govern-
ment

ment to endeavour to obtain Seats in Parliament; when these Employments are taken away, the Friends of the Government will be much less anxious to come into Parliament; which must not only give an Opportunity to the *Enemies* of the Government of being Elected, but they will spare no Expence to obtain their Elections, when they are sure to be rewarded by a *Foreign Power*, whose Interests they are determin'd to promote.

This is the Light, in which every impartial Man will consider those Places, which are given to Members of Parliament.

They are the great *Inducement* and *Encouragement* to Men of ancient Families and *large Fortunes*, who are *Friends* to the present Establishment, to undergo the *Fatigue* and *Expence* of serving their Country in that Station.

Take

Take away this Encouragement, and it will not only be the sure Means to fill the House of Commons with Men of *low Birth and Fortunes*; but you at the same time open a Gap to the *profess'd Enemies* of the present Establishment, to be the only Representatives of their Country in Parliament.

So that the Law, as it now stands, and allows of so many Places to be held by Members of the House of Commons, is so far from being dangerous to the Liberty of the Subject, or to the Constitution; that, next to the *Affections* of the People, it is the *strongest Security* of the present Establishment.

It will, I am sensible, be objected to this, ---- That, though it be true, that the permitting so many Places to be held by Members of the House of Commons is an *Encouragement* to Men of Rank and Fortune, who

who are Friends to the Government, to be at the Expence and Fatigue of serving their Country in Parliament; yet these Places do nevertheless *biass* and *influence* Men in giving their Votes in that House; and consequently, that what I urge, is no Answer to the Objection, - - - That Members of the House of Commons are influenc'd by Places.

Now allowing that Places do in some Cases influence Members of that House; I appeal to every impartial Man, whether there be the least Probability that a House of Commons, composed of Men of the greatest Rank and Property, which will always be the Case whilst these Places subsist, and which is an unanswerable Argument against reducing their Number; - - - I appeal to every unprejudic'd Person, whether it be not the height of Absurdity and Contradiction, to suppose

such

Such Men can be influenc'd by any Means to give up their Liberties, or to suffer any Breach to be made in the Constitution.

It were easy to give Instances in several Parliaments, of many Things that have been carried but by small Majorities, which it will be confess'd did not in the least affect or endanger Liberty or the Constitution.

And can it be thought then that a Parliament, composed of Men of the greatest Rank and Property, will be influenc'd to approve of any Measures which visibly and undeniably strike at the very Foundation of our Liberties and the Constitution?

In this Case then there is no other possible Rule to direct us how to act, but this, of two Evils to chuse the least.

Suffer none, or a very small Number of Places, to be held by Members

Members of the House of Commons, the certain Consequence will be, that you open a *Gap* to fill that House with Men of low Fortunes, and such as are *profess'd Enemies* to the Government.

On the other hand, let no Reduction be made of the present Number of Places, it is probable there may be *Cases* in which Influence may prevail against Mens Judgment.

What now is to be done? If one or other of these cannot be prevented, and must be endur'd; if you must either admit of *some* Influence in Matters of *less* moment, or if the only Means to prevent that Influence will of necessity, in our present Circumstances, open the way for another and a *foreign Influence*, which must destroy this Government, and impose the *Pretender* upon us; — must not the

D

People

People of *England* be deluded, and I may say *providentially blinded*, not to see their own Destruction, in requiring it of their Members to promote a Bill, which in our present Circumstances, and in the present Conjuncture, must bring immediate and inevitable Ruin upon their Country, and entail *Popery* and *Slavery* upon themselves and their Posterity?

Had we never seen *British* Parliaments influenc'd by *French* Gold, — had not those Parliaments been chiefly composed of *Tories*; — and were it not as impossible for a *Tory* to change his *Principles*, as for an *Ethiopian* to change his *Skin*, — I would be as zealous as any Man to limit the Number of Places in the House of Commons.

But to do it at this Juncture, when we see what Influence a neighbouring Power has gain'd over

over the Councils of too many of its Neighbours, and know by what Means this has been done, and when a general *Election* is at hand; — to pass such a Bill at this time, must, I am firmly persuaded, be attended with the most fatal Consequences to this Nation.

It may perhaps be inferr'd and concluded from what I have asserted, *viz.* That if this Bill were to pass, it would open the way for the Enemies of the Government to be the prevailing Party in the next Parliament; — that if this be true, *Disaffection* must generally prevail throughout the Kingdom.

But, God be thanked, this is very far from being our *Condition*.

But then this is not to be deny'd, that *Corruption* has got such an Ascendency in all, or most of the *Boroughs* of *England*, that no Regard is had by the Electors to the *Prin-*

ciples of any Candidate, but the best *Bidder* is sure to carry his Election, even tho' the Majority of the Electors be in the Interest of the Government, and they have the most convincing Proof that the Person they elect is a *profess'd Enemy* to the present Establishment.

This is a farther Proof, and a very strong one too, of the fatal Consequence of passing such a Bill.

For if this Bill will *discourage* all Men of large Fortunes, who are Friends to the Government, from being Candidates at the next Election; and if the *profess'd Enemies* to the present Establishment, and Men of low Fortunes, will be almost the *only Candidates* in an ensuing Election; — what can possibly prevent it, but that these Men will be the *Majority* in the next Parliament?

Upon

Upon the whole: If it be true, that Parliaments, throughout the whole Reign of *King William*, were influenc'd by *French* Councils. —

If the permitting so many Places to be held by Members of the House of Commons, be the great, and in our present Circumstances, the only *Hindrance* to the Enemies of the Government coming into Parliament. — If in case this Bill

should pass, very few of the Friends to the Government will undertake the Fatigue and Expence of representing their Country in Parliament.

— If by the passing of this Bill a *Way* will be open'd to fill the House of Commons with Men of low Fortunes, and such as are profess'd Enemies to the Government, and consequently *French* Councils will prevail in that great Assembly. — And if the present Number of Places is a certain, and perhaps

perhaps the only sure *Method* to have that House fill'd with Men of the *greatest Rank and Property*. ———

If these Things be true, and will admit of no Reply, it is to be hoped “the Eyes of the People” “(as the *Craftsman* expresses it)” “will be fully opened,” and they will discover the *secret* Springs of pushing on this Bill with such an uncommon Spirit and Vehemence at this critical Juncture; and that the Nation in general, instead of following “the glorious and exemplary Conduct of the City of *London*,” which can serve only to throw the whole Kingdom into a Flame, will declare, — — — *That they do not think this a proper and a seasonable Time to bring in a Bill of this Nature.*



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